FAQ FULL MOON RITUALS

FULL MOON FAQ

This is the Full Moon Ritual (hereafter referred to as FMR) FAQ sheet. This will let you know what it is and how it works, hopefully, and if it doesn't then please feel free to ask questions on the list.

Who can "be in" FMR?
The FMR is not a coven or any kind of formal group; it's a community event, open to all who care to participate. By participate, we mean lead, invoke a quarter, "petition" (see somewhere later), or just read along and/or lend energy. Most leaders, but not all, ask that those intending to participate "sign in" beforehand; the main reason is so we're expecting you to "speak" and don't close before you get your chance.

So who gets to be leader?
Interesting question. Generally the previous leader will nominate someone immediately after the end of the ritual to lead next month. This may be someone they personally want to see lead, or they may leave the decision to the Gods (I once put all the invokers' names in a little bowl I have...). If the person nominated can't lead next month, they will frequently suggest an alternate; if they don't, it kicks back to the previous leader to try someone else. If the outgoing leader REALLY doesn't want to nominate, he or she will ask for a volunteer.

Who gets to do the other stuff?
Usually we ask for volunteers for the quarter, Goddess and God invocations. If there are more volunteers than needed, it's the leader's choice. This isn't a question of quality; it's usually a matter of balance (males and females, old people and new people, whatever).
What's a petition?

After the invocations are completed, the leader usually does a transition to the body of the ritual, which normally consists of people's personal workings, which are frequently of the "asking for something" persuasion, hence the word "petition", which is used to mean anyone's personal contribution. Other than workings for a desired goal, "petitions" have included expressions of gratitude to the gods and/or the members, performances of poetry or music, whatever people want to do with their space. Petitions aren't scheduled; you come in any time during the main window, usually 4-5 days.

How does it work?
The FMR is done during a 5-7 day window. The leader posts an opening note, setting place and mood, usually casting the circle, and welcoming participants. Over the next 24-48 hours the quarters are called, the God and Goddess are invoked, and the leader posts a transition to the petition period. Thereafter people come in at their own time to petition until the pre-announced time of closing, when the leader posts a final hail-and-farewell. It isn't necessary to leave your computer on all week, or to do a physical working that

exactly mirrors your petition. While it's true that we take a week to do the ritual; it is also true that it lasts one night. It is VERY true that the power raised is genuine, and that requests are answered often and wonderfully. There are some things that you can do to make the most of the power of the experience. First, she said with great emphasis, READ THE WHOLE THING. If you're coming in to petition, backdate to start if need be and read your way to where you'll be next to "speak". After the ritual has ended, read the whole thing again and allow yourself to feel it all in one piece. Second, any mundane legwork associated with your petition has to happen; if you're asking for that job you just applied for, have you called and asked if they received your application? Also, many of us (not all, not every time) do some version of our FMR petition in real-time. It may not be as elaborate as what you do in cyberspace, which has fewer rules, but some personal working appears to help. Third, believe it. One time someone asked how many people had gotten what they asked for, and the results were pretty astonishing.

So how do I get in on this?
Some time around New Moon, the leader for the next FMR posts an announcement of timelines, probably a call for volunteers, maybe a preliminary mention of place, maybe a format note if something special is planned. As replies to that note, people sign up to invoke and/or petition, ask questions, etc. Watch for there appearance of FULL MOON ROLL CALL, which is where this sort of thing takes place. It's also the place for any side discussion that may go on during the ritual, such as "nifty invocation, Joe" or "sorry I was late for East". No experience is required, but a little background is useful, and it can be acquired by reading a previous FMR or two (copies of past FMRs are archived on this website, if you'd like to read them). As you read past rituals, the few style points become apparent, notably that we reply to the previous reply especially during invocations (keeps them in the right order) and that we write in third person and do a fair bit of describing what we're doing; first person is only usual when we're actually "speaking". Example: Cloud stops typing for a moment and scratches her head. She almost wonders what she was about to say, but remembering what it was, she speaks: "Hey! Now I remember!"

That's it from me, for now. A thousand thank-you to Cloud (one of the original FMR moms) for this information!

A NOTE ON THE DETERMINATION OF MOONS

The Moons here a determined by the following list, beginning with the first full moon after Yule. Many different moon names exist, and I've tried to provide a few alternates as well.

- **Wolf Moon** {chaste, cold, disting, little winter, quiet, wolf}
- **Horning Moon** {big winter, hunger, ice, storm, wild}
- **Storm Moon** {crow, plow, sap, seed, wind, worm}
- **Seed Moon** {growing, hare, planter's}
- **Hare Moon** {bright, dyad, flower, frog, merry}
- **Meade Moon** {honey, horse, dyad, lovers', rose, strawberry, strong sun}
- **Fallow Moon** {blessing, buck, hay, wort}
- **Barley Moon** {corn, fertile, grain}
- **Wine Moon** {harvest, singing}
- **Blood Moon** {falling leaf, harvest, hunting, vintage}
- **Snow Moon** {beaver, dark, fog, mad, shedding, storm}
- **Oak Moon** {big winter, cold, long night, wolf}
- **Elder Moon** {Blue Moon - the thirteenth moon in a solar year, despite the modern notion that even the ancients called it the second moon in a month for our matrifocal ancestors who lived by a Lunar Calendar, it was impossible to have two moons in a month, as a moon was a month!}

Old Castle Ritual Room **Wolf Moon Leader : Red Deer Date : 30 December 2001**

The days after Yule had found Red Deer ever more intent on singing a place sometimes his alone but more often a part of the real world into the Old Castle environs. Now, on the night of the full moon, he lay again on the central altar amid the circle and spiral of standing stones, only a few miles out in the country from the southern part of heaven. A glorious full moon shone overhead, with only wisps of clouds. She illuminated the lithons of rough hewn sandstone - the quarter-stones of which stood some twenty feet tall. When Deer first found this circle, it was unlike any he'd experienced before - not actually a circle but a spiral winding in from the north and completing two turns before meeting the circle of quarter-stones, then one more to the central altar slab - but over the past few years he'd become quite at home here. A newly built edifice on an anciently hallowed hillside.

As part of the song, Deer called the memory of a prior Yule when he had lain just so upon that altar for what seemed hours - watching Mama Moon as She had appeared to sail through the regathering clouds - before he had become aware of the fog rolling in from Chapel Hill. Entranced, he had held his breath as the fog mounted the hillock in a deosil spiral until wisps of it were floating into the circle itself and seeming to dance among the standing stones. Tonight Deer sang the fog up the hill and watched as it rose to claim even the tallest of the stones. Then, he stood, shed all sense of himself and waited - until awareness of a distinctly different atmosphere accosted his skin and his nose with smells of ancient oak, selaginella and leaf mold. Opening his eyes, he sees the moon reflected in a glass smooth lake which also reflects the walls and turret of the Old Castle off to the south, and realizes that his gateway into this place has brought the stone circle just to the eastern edge of the ancient grove, where so many previous moons have been celebrated.

Becoming aware of a faint smell of ozone and then noticing that, while grove and castle appear solidly limned, the lithons about him possess a certain transparent quality, Deer turns to each of the quarters, contemplating the wise words inscribed upon each of the quarter stones, and returns to his song. Had anyone else been afoot, they might have noticed antlers - outlined in a faint bluish light, upon Deer's forehead as he made his way first three turns out then three back in the spiral. Each stone he pauses to touch, to hug, to kiss... and each stone becomes limned in the same faint blue light as his antlers before acquiring more of an air of solidity. Back at the central stone, Deer climbs upon it and drops to his right knee, both hands clasped upon his left. Still Deer sings - of hills and sky, grove and stones, lake and castle - ending only when the odd light and the faint acrid odor have been completely subsumed in the more usual qualities of this place. Again he waits, knowing that no matter how well sung, this work will not remain without the blessing of his uncle. And waiting, Deer finds time to dwell upon plans for tonight's moon. Lost in mental preparations, he is startled by the clatter of hoof upon stone and looks up just in time to see a great stag - rack held high in the starlit sky - bounding from stone to stone, turning about the outward spiral of this place before disappearing into the

wood. "Blessed Be, Uncle, and a thousand thank you's," Deer calls out cheerfully as he inwardly kicks himself for having been so inattentive to the comings and goings about him. However, had the Uncle desired interaction, he would have initiated it... and Deer was overjoyed with the seeming air of permanence and age which now seemed to emanate from the stones about him.

Taking his leave of the standing stones - and more than certain that he would return to celebrate a moon with old friends here - Deer makes his way toward the lake where he picks up the western loop of a trail which circles its girth before branching off toward the Old Castle. Passing by the heart of the Old Grove, Deer is certain that he senses the presence of more that forest creatures there, and thinks that he hears the familiar voice of a sister, perhaps singing into this place some magical working of her own. A light western breeze brings to his nostrils the familiar scents of old oak and creeping cedar, mixed tonight with new ones which Deer wished he had time to catalog. Deer briefly remembered another path which spirals up the hill - passing from mighty groves of oak (white, chestnut, scarlet and their kith and kin), through towering stands of white ash and into long-leaf pine barrens lining the hill's broad shoulders - going thrice around before passing through the thorn thickets which line the truly ancient grove of mixed species circled about the castle before reaching the top after.

But duty (joyous as this one is) calls, so he moves along the main trace which climbs the southern face of the hill directly towards the Old Castle. By the time Deer crests the hill and pauses beneath the ancient turret, the pack he carries has become quite a weight - but all weariness departs as he lays hand upon the great bronze knocker which hangs before him. Oncely, twicely, thricely he knocks - hearing the deep bass from the heavy bronze spread from the sound board of the huge oak door and then reverberate through the depths of the great hall - and then he waits for the Castle to answer. "Welcome child," he senses more than hears, before gently pushing the mighty door inward. Ancient as this place is, the heavy door turns easily and silently upon its hinges. A sense of timelessness and yet of immense age washes over Deer as he stands beneath the high lentil, momentarily swept away in memories of many moons spent within these walls.

Lowering his pack to the floor, Deer retrieves from its depths a large beeswax globe of deepest crimson, which he sets upon the broad sill of the window that sidelights the ancient door, and lights the wick protruding from its crown. Almost instantly, a specter of cinnamon flows into the cavernous depths of the great room as the light illuminates the stone foyer and shines as a beacon through the window and out into the night. Deer lays a blessing about the doorway for all who enter here this eve and places a wicker basket upon the sill of the sidelight window opposite to the candle, which is filled to overflowing with small felt reindeer (Rodney's, Rhonda's, Ramona's and Randy's from the local Hallmark) intended to depart homewards with each celebrant, then shoulders his pack and moves deeper into the belly of this place. Elenya's willow broom still leans beside the massive walk-in fireplace, black with the smoke and soot of generations, behind the long feasting table that runs the length of the hall - a broom which will soon be put to good use. Before cleaning, however, Deer leaves his pack upon the table, and proceeds to ferry and kindling and logs from the wood pile outside into the stone

fireplace. As soon as this work is done, Deer adds flame to the mix and is soon warmed by the fury of a roaring fire. While the fire lends even more light to the cavernous room, that job is not complete until each of the thirteen torches which line the eastern wall are lit, along with their counterparts on the western wall as well. Now, surrounded by the warmth which comes both from the fire and from his memories of this place, Deer sets about preparing the room for the coming festivities. Taking El's broom, Deer removes the few cobwebs which have accumulated between the overarching catwalks, careful to leave the living webs behind. Then he sweeps out the entire hall. Finally, Deer reviews his work at the long table - where the beginnings of a feast are prepared, with many extra platters, bowls and pitchers to receive that which friends may bring in offering to each other this moon - and ends by lighting all of the tapers in the triple candelabra which span the table's length.

Seeing that all is ready in the great hall, Deer moves to its far end and throws open the doors to the circular stone ritual room, the first room built here and still the Old Castle's heart. Surprised by a magic he's never really noticed before, Deer ponders how it is that doors from the northern end of the Great Hall open onto the North Quarter of the ritual room... then decides that this is simply one of the many mysteries of the place. By the altar, Cloud's apple broom stands and he wastes no time taking it in hand and sweeping widdershins in a widening spiral, until he removes all the dust and unwanted energy into the great hall and then into the fire. Upon returning to the circular room, Deer again admires the hemicolumns set against the wall about the stone room's perimeter, which support the ribwork of its vaulted ceiling, before opening the small panel on the eastern section of the wall. Here lay two discoveries - the first and foremost Cloud's and the latter his own - both embodied in a simple lever. Deer pulls it down and watches as a small skylight irises open in the center of the domed ceiling above, then pulls it further to its lowest position. Now, the mechanism virtually purrs as the copper blades covering the skylight retract beyond the small iris and drop all the way down to rest upon the capitals of the room's thirteen columns. In here, those same stars he'd lain beneath earlier seem even brighter, and twinkle with the promise of a Presence which he eagerly anticipates.

Deer spreads the evening's altar cloth - black silk embroidered with a double spiral of spun silver, between the arms of which shine moons and stars - upon the old slab in the stone room's center. He has just placed candlesticks with one silver taper and one black, when he hears the rustle of folk arriving in the great hall. Deer gives the cloth a final adjustment, assuring that the silver pentagram of Celtic knotwork in its center is appropriately oriented and quickly places quarter candles upon the four sculpted pedestals positioned at the room's perimeter - beeswax pillars heavily scented with the finest essential oils - and finally pauses at the altar for a brief moment, where he notices the first pale rays of tonight's moon lapping over the eastern edge of the widely opened skylight; rays of a tide which brings the promise of tonight's full moon shining down upon them in all her splendor. Then a last check of the essentials upon the altar for this evening's ritual: a sun-bleached tortoise shell filled with sea-salt, a copper bowl of fresh rainwater, and a small reiku censer with charcoal beside a smaller silver plate covered with powdered dragon's blood and amber. There too is his athame of Georgian silver covered in spirals, his bronze torq, and his linden wand. Deer whispers, "bowl of my

mother's best friend, torq of my forebears' freedom, root of my great-grandmother's ancestral tree, and blade of my own finding; it is good that we are here together again." Assured that all is ready, he moves back toward the great hall and, after closing the doors to this sacred space, welcomes with the broadest of smiles and warmest of hugs each new arrival to the evening's festivities.

As the hours of early evening pass, the old hall is once again filled with the sounds of conversation and merriment... friends catching up on recent events, discussing individual plans and aspirations for this evening's ritual, and perhaps even a tale or two of their adventures in the wood upon the spiral path leading here. The hall is filled with the scents of Carolina deer's tongue and Sudanese frankincense from the many beeswax votives burning in every nook and cranny, and with the gathering smells of the feast being lain for afterwards. Seemingly from within the walls themselves emanates the sound of many a lively reel, and those gathered sometimes pause to note the individual artistry of bagpipe, bodhran, dulcimer, fiddle, harp, and uillean; perhaps not realizing that while many of the evening's tunes are heard by all, there is also a single melody for each which no one else hears - and for Deer, each melody brings a tale from the beginnings of this eve...

...The season of Yule wears so many faces. Although there are many paths, each seems to recognize the speciality of the time when the world balances on the axis, and for just a moment, each of us takes pause and senses the delicate structure of our vast universe. And once again, the promise if fulfilled. Owl walks slowly thru the glen surrounding the castle. There are spaces, where the grass is well tended, and mature plantings give evidence of human hand. Yet she feels most comforted in wandering thru those wooded areas where faint paths mark the passing of the deer, the otter, the skunk, the fox, the bear, and the raccoon. Stepping softly, becoming a creature of the forest, she can hear, in the distance, the song of a friend. Stopping in the shadows, she breathes deeply, and the scent of the pines, crisp and pure, tickles her nose. She places her hands on the rough bark of an old Oak tree, and tunes her body to the slow movement of the branches as the wind plays softly among the leaves, as though caressing an old friend. She can feel the subtle shifting of the deep roots, as the tree responds to the breeze, lifting it's arms and swaying gently in a stately dance. A sudden rustle, and shower of leaves breaks her concentration, and a soft "hoot .. hoot .. hoot" reaches her ears. Looking up with a grin, she can make out the profile of the Great Horned Owl, as he watches her... wondering what this strange little lady is doing out at this hour hugging his tree!

"Hello, my brother!" whispers, Owl... "shall we sing together tonight?" Owl climbs up onto a strong branch, and settles herself in the nook of the tree. Her brother Owl watches warily, yet without much concern. His head turns regally, as if to say, "Well, as long as you're here, and you have manners, it makes no nevermind to me!"

And softly she sings... a bit sentimental... Edelweiss... and then, using the same tune, she makes up her own words, greeting the Oak, and then the Owl, and all the creatures which

share this beautiful forest. Her song is of life, and love, and acknowledgment that to each of the creatures in this world, there is a common bond. She serenades the land, and the land sings back... in the sighing of the wind in the trees, the hoot of the Owl, the gurgle of the stream, the buzz and chirp of the insects, while fireflies dance in the melodies.

Rested, and comforted, Owl climbs down from the Tree, thanking all for joining with her in this special moment. And heads for the Castle. At the huge doors, she lifts the knocker, and waits for the Castle to bid her welcome. As the doors glide open, she is glad to see a warm fire blazing, and there is evidence that someone has been there already, for the floor has been swept, and candles lighted. The torches blaze around the room, and the table has been laid with bowls waiting to be filled. Owl has brought a pan of Baklava, made lovingly by a valued friend, who has a wonderful way with this dish. The delicate phylo dough, stuffed with nuts and spices, and drenched in the honeyed nectar, is a most appropriate offering this night. "There will be many who will recognize this recipe, and drool at the thought of another chance to sample the sweet, spicy flavors," Owl thinks, with a grin.

Soon, she hears others coming up the path, and wonders where Deer is. After her climbing in the tree, and trampling thru the brush, she figures she'd best freshen up a bit before everyone gets here. Taking herself off to the small dressing room off the kitchen, Owl combs her hair, and washes up, then dons her robes for the Yule festivities. Since she will be calling on the Sun to come back in all his glory, she wears a golden robe, shot with slivers of mirrored cloth. Gold and mirrored bits drip from her necklace and earrings. Amber rings adorn her fingers, and strings of tiny golden bells adorn her ankles. "This is a joyous season..." Owl states to the Castle as much as herself. "Let the bells ring out, let the candles glow, and let friendship warm the hearts as the fires warm the hearths... SO MOTE IT BE!..."

...Owl's melody merges seamlessly into another, which makes its way to Deer's heart...

...A black bear wanders into a stone circle, followed by a low flying small grey owl. The circle smells fresh, but the stones are old. So is the black bear. She is an older bear, her coat is still black but tinged with new grey. Sniffing the stone altar in the center, she recognizes the scent. Deer... but not. There is a calling she has been following all evening, and she knows she is on the right track.

She wanders to the lake, moon reflected in its mirror finish. She turns and spies the castle. This smells old, very old. And this is where she is to go. She looks back at the moon hanging in the sky, stands on her rear legs for a moment staring at the Mother Moon. A change takes place, and there is a shift in the shadow of the bear and a shadow of a human which meld into one. Then shadow then wanders towards the castle.

The owl alights upon the shoulder of the shadow. Through the grove, up the path; the figures wanders, looking and taking it all in. What a marvelous old place, so full of energy and wonder. Each turn brings more feelings and it smells of the Deer. She heard him call, brother Red Deer, and she had to join him on this moon.

The doors, huge oak things, open to her touch and are welcoming. Lights in the hall, fire in the fireplace, warm and inviting. As she steps through the door, Boudica's red braided hair shines in the light. Blue gown, dark as midnight, with small silver stars embroidered all over, trimmed with small silver collar and cuffs. She has some small pouches at her waist, and upon her shoulder is the small grey owl. She looks around, an unfamiliar place. It's where she should be.

The ritual room attracts her attention. As she enters, the owl takes flight to the rafters. Energy, much old, wondrous energy. Looking up, the night sky is clear and the moon is starting to to make Her way across the open roof. Boudica is thrilled, it's a glorious site, and then a hand on her shoulder pulls her out of her wonder. Brother Deer! She gives him a warm hug, good to see him again, and she looks around the room at all who have gathered, with many familiar faces. She gives warm hugs to all gathered in this place. So good to see many of you all again...

...And in the midst of sharing a welcome hug with his sister Boudica, Deer is entranced by yet another melody... another wave of this evening's mounting history...

...Carielle lay on the cold ground of the Old Grove, looking up at the moon and watching the clouds chase stars across the sky. She lets her perspective shift back and forth - first, the clouds race across the face of the moon, then the moon jumps from behind the shadows of cloud banks. Faster and faster, the clouds race, until finally all that is left in her field of vision is a bare wisp or two flying on the wind.

As the clouds drift away, Carielle becomes aware of her surroundings, particularly the hooting of an owl in the near vicinity. "Whooo, whoo," it calls, and in her mind, Carielle hears the rest of the owl's query. "Who waits for you, Carielle? Who stands in the circle and awaits your calling? Who? Whoooo?"

Carielle rises and turns her feet to the path leading to the Old Castle. Like clouds upon the sky, her feet fly along the cold ground, and she laughs as the Castle comes into view. First, she is running toward it, then as perspective shifts, the Castle seems to meet and embrace her, drawing her into its ancient interior. Her feet barely touch the floor, and she lets her hand run lightly along the wall in a gentle caress as she glides into the Ritual Room. She smiles at the gathering before her, at old friends and new, and happy hugs are sent all around. It is so good to gather again!...

...A sudden icy claw at Deer's chest causes him to wonder who dear to him must traverse such pain, such thirst in coming here. Another pang brings him fully into this strand of the evening's melody...

...A thin figure draped in a long and tattered gray robe and cloak, gray hair hanging lankly to her waist, Sharon slowly makes the final few steps left in her journey back to the Castle. She has traveled alone, barefoot and without provision, along the spine of the sleeping dragon in the desolate mountain range overlooking the region of Grove and Castle, her mission to renew her awareness of that aspect of the Goddess now reigning in her life.

The Death Hag is a harsh taskmistress, but Her wisdom is worth the effort required to absorb even a fraction of it. Sharon rests briefly on the strength of the staff that has helped her through the long days and nights of walking, the warm ebony wood almost soft against her palms. She closes her eyes and remembers… Rock and dirt, frost and ice glittering in the white moonlight, a chiaroscuro scene more like a landscape on the physical moon than on earth. Smells of cold dust and frozen water. Sounds only of the tiny breakages in earth's bones of rock, snaps and cracks that are birth cries of minute particles of soil - the ultimate nourishment of us all. We all eat dirt, Sharon reflects as she trudges onward. Dirt formed finally into animal and vegetable that we find palatable. But still dirt. Dry dust rises in small clouds at each footfall. And eventually each of us in our fleshly form returns to dirt, becomes dirt once again. Our matter becomes matter and our energy…? Maybe The Hag knows where our energy goes, but She's not saying. At least not tonight.

Sharon breathes in the dry, dusty, cold air, feeling the membranes in her nose contract at the contact. She is very thirsty. The rock eventually gives way to more forgiving ground, covered with low pine trees and cushioned slightly with their shed needles. The smell of dust changes to the tang of pine. But the clean scent is undergirded with the stink of decay. Sharon walks on past moldering corpses, creatures of the earth now returning in loathsome form to that earth. She gags, pressing a corner of her robe to her face to block out some of the sights and smells. Yet she knows and acknowledges as she passes the horrifying mounds that she too will one day be as they are. Her thirst increases.

Soon she passes through the charnel scene and reaches an area of taller pines and other trees bordering a lake. There the air is clear of corruption, sweet now with the scent of the water. Sharon kneels on a narrow beach of cold mud and drinks deeply, bending to the life-giving liquid as a suppliant would to a god-form in a temple. Water, as much an essence of life as the dirt and decay she passed over and by, refreshes her, renews her and strengthens her for the rest of her journey up the path to the Castle.

Though the deciduous trees along the way are bare of leaves, their skeletal branches do

not disturb her, but remind her that even bones can be like beautiful lace when seen with eyes that look beyond naked appearances to the underlying truths of existence. So may it be for all who gather this night. At the Castle door now, she raises her staff and signals for entrance. Given permission, she walks slowly inside, eyes filled with glad tears. So many dear ones here! But she is still held within, not ready to greet or exhibit the joy she feels at this reunion of like minds and spirits. She hopes her Hag aspect will teach rather than repel. Having no answers, she can only represent the questions and trust the Goddess to do the rest. Slowly, she moves round the ritual room into the circle and waits her turn to invoke the Quarter ruling her now...

...After all the greetings have been made, hugs shared and stories told, Deer leads all assembled in a deosil circle about the room - beginning at the wide doors opening into the Great Hall. He joins in the "ooh's" and "ah's" at the sight of Mama high overhead, her rays refracted and reflected throughout the room by the heavily leaded glass overhead in such as way as to make the procession feel to him as though he leaps from moment to moment, rather than sailing through the vast sea of time. He proceeds about the space - one circle of the perimeter, one a spiral in towards the altar stone, and a final spiral outwards - ending by the doors at which they'd entered. Seeing that all have taken up their stations about the circle, Deer quietly closes the heavy circular doors, turns to face into the circle and stands in silence, contemplating the circle about to be raised...

...his contemplation done, Deer recognizes with the deep booming of the cloister bell that the time is at hand. Casting his eyes, and his smile, about the circle, he welcomes sisters and brothers and friends - both old and new - to this gathering. Then, moving with only the sound of a shimmering glissando, Deer is by their altar. He is glad to be barefooted in this place, where the stones are ever warm and the feathery touch of selagenella - transplanted from his own back yard to the spaces between the flagstones - lightly tickles.

From its hidden place within a deep recess in the altar stone, Deer retrieves a smallish candle - a rough taper of natural beeswax, uncolored, unscented and simply rolled about a wick - already lit from the hearth in the Great Hall. It's light virtually leaps out among their circle as he lifts it high overhead. "Other than that from Mama," he states, "may the light for our ritual come from the hearth of this place which has been spiritual home to many." Deer lowers the unassuming candle to the reiku censer, carefully lighting the charcoal piece waiting on the white sand within. He then sets the candle gently in upon the altar's center and takes up the hand-hammered copper bowl given him many years ago by his mother's best friend.

Moving out to the perimeter of those gathered, Deer proceeds deosil - in recognition of the newly growing light - about the circle. As he moves, Deer asperges the dark flagstones - as well as any whom indicated through glance or nod their desire - with fresh rain water. "Of water is this circle cast. Fluidly, the energies within may ebb and flow."

Completing his first circumambulation, Deer returns to their altar and replaces the bowl after asperging himself. Next, he retrieves the turtle shell he'd found in the forest during high school and kept ever since. Again he takes the perimeter and moves deosil, now sprinkling - ever so lightly - the stones and those participants so desirous with glittering sea salt ground to the finest of powders. "With salt of the earth is this circle cast," Deer sings "as Mother Earth both elaborates and contains the energies of life, so may our circle." Back to the altar and replacing the bone bowl, Deer touches first the salt within it and then his forehead, lips and chest. Finally, Deer uses his athame to heap mounds of the amber and dragon's blood upon the now glowing coal within the censer, before beginning his third and final perambulation of the circle. Air which had been redolent of scents from the great hall and from this room itself is suddenly stilled as the bittersweet smoke penetrates their entire ritual space. As Deer censes the circle and those gathered, he sings, "Of fire and air is this circle cast. As the sweetness of amber reminds us of union with deity, so the bitterness of blood remembers our separation. Ever joined, ever apart - we with our Gods and this circle with the Great Wheel and with Creation."

Deer replaces the still smoking censer upon the altar, then turns to smile broadly at each of the gathered celebrants. "And so is our circle raised... a place that is all places and none, a time that is eternal and timeless. Here we seek to recreate that which arose from our Lady's and Lord's sacred dance. Here we leave our world behind and weave threads which we shall find upon our return have forever changed it. Here we are both the One and the Many."

Deer takes up the small hearth candle from the altar and moves to the North Quarter, where he presents it - with a huge hug - to his sister Boudica. Then, with a wink, he takes his place beside Owl among the circle of celebrants and watches as...

...Boudica was aware that a hush fell over the room as Deer started to work. She watched as Deer had set up the Circle. When he has done, she dances steps inward on a spiral to the altar, and takes up the tortoise shell filled with salt and dances steps outward in a spiral to the north. From her pouch she takes some earth from her travels, and sprinkles it upon the floor. Standing upon the earth, she sprinkles some salt on the floor, mixing the salt with the earth. Her mind fills with the fog of the early evening and smells of deers tongue and frankincense, the woods and the castle and the Full Moon. She sways back and forth to a music she hears and she sings this music to the North.

Ancient One of the North
You who are Earth
She who is Mother
You who sleeps now the deep sleep of Winter
You who reminds us that we will all sleep
And that we shall all awaken again.
She who wraps us now in a cloak of cold
yet warms us with the fires of the hearth

From whom we come, and to whom we return

Come, Ancient One of the North
You who are Earth
She who is Mother
Step lightly as the new fallen snow
Come dance with us this evening
tinkle as icicles upon our roofs
Join us in our songs, laugh with us,
Fill our hearts with merriment
as we celebrate together this night

From somewhere there was music. It echoes in the great hall as Boudica turns and lights the quarter candle, then step dances a spiral back to the altar and replaces the tortoise shell on the altar. She bows to the elements.

She looks up and around at the people gathered in the circle, her blue eyes flashing, and she smiles at all who have gathered. She turns, and to the last echoes of the music, she spirals back to her place in the circle after passing to Carielle in the East the Castle's modest flame...

...After meets and greets, Carielle had taken her place in circle, and felt the energies begin to rise as Deer raised the circle. Her heart pounded in time with Boudica's song as she called North, and she smiled as Boudica spiraled back to her place in the circle.

With dancing feet, Carielle moves to the altar and takes up the incense. Gracefully, she steps quickly to the East point and raises the incense up, spiraling it three times. As the incense smoke curls upward, Carielle calls,

"Ancient Ones of the East,
Element of Air,
Keepers of the ancient wisdoms,
Of intellect and beauty,
First Breath and Last,
We welcome you to our rite!
Be with us now..."

Slowly, the wind picks up, barely noticeable at first. Spiraling 'round, the wind causes Carielle's red hair to brush and dance against her face, and she smiles as she hears the voices whispering upon the wind. The incense smoke spirals upward, making shapes in the air - first, the shadow of an owl, then the visage of a hawk, and finally as the smoke begins to calm, the voices of the wind speak clearly. "We are Here."

Carielle nods her head in greeting, lights the quarter candle and then turns and carries the

incense back to the altar. As she moves back toward her place in the circle, her eyes seek out and meet those of her beloved husband, Typo Demon. She passes him the Castle candle before retaking her place in the circle. A soft smile escapes her as she watches him move to his place in the South...

Typo stands silenty in the circle, barely aware of the events around him, contemplating the nature of elemental fire... rebirth, like the legendary phoenix who was reborn from its own ashes to live again. The warmth of small fire burning in the fireplace, or the fires that rage to burn away underbrush to re-energize the land.

Typo steps forward and looks starkly serious at those gathered around the circle, with the Castle Candle held high above his head he calls:

"Ancient Ones of the South,
Element of Fire,
You who light the world with the suns glow
You who light my heart with desire
We bid you welcome to this rite
be with us now this night."

Typo spins back to his place in the circle with the Castle Candle now held firmly by both hands close to his chest. His thoughts turn briefly to his wife and how easily she brings out the spirit of fire in his heart and mind. Typo hands the Candle to Sharon and waits for the call to the West...

...As Typo steps back, Sharon steps forward. From the altar she picks up the copper bowl. Facing West and raising the candle and the bowl she invokes the Guardian:

“O Watcher of the West,
Ancient One Most fearful and mysterious
We welcome You to this circle
Bless and wash us with Your Presence….”

As she speaks, a fierce wind laced with sleet and icy rain blasts into the circle, causing robes to flap and twist and bodies to shiver with the sudden damp chill. With the water comes the cold smell of winter rain, then the sound of a soft voice-not Sharon’s-speaking:

“Remember that I, too, am The Mother and that I too am necessary for all birth and rebirth.” The wet wind shrieks and sighs and circles the ritual room, then passes on, leaving the participants dry and once more comfortable, if somewhat shaken. Sharon speaks again:

“Guard us, O Ancient One
Keep us this night and join with us as we
Celebrate both life and death.
For without one there is no possibility of the other.”

Sharon then returns to the altar, setting the bowl in its place. Frost covers the outside of the bowl and the water inside is now frozen. After gently placing the Castle candle between the tapers of our Lady and Lord, she steps back to her place in the circle...

...Owl steps slowly forward, drawing Reddeer by the hand along with her. They walk together around the Circle, greeting each and everyone .. old friends, back together again .. new friends, standing in this ageless place. Finally, she turns to Deer .. a grin wells up, and his answering smile beams at her. She swings away, still holding his hand, in a graceful dance. The gold of her robes, threaded with mirrored bits, catches the fire light and sparkles like a million flickering fireflies. As she circles Deer, they hold eye contact, and she can feel him begin to tremble in anticipation. A blush comes to her cheeks, and the torches burn brighter ... the fireplace roars as a draft comes down the chimney ... all focus on the dance before them.

Owl places her hand on Deer's breast, feeling the beat of his heart, and the tremble of his body.

"You are the Altar ... prepared to receive the God, as we dance, and sing, and light the fires recalling the Sun from the distance."

Owl lifts here arms, and gazes up at the night sky, clearly glistening thru the skylight. The Moon is at her fullest, the stars dance around her, and the world waits in expectation.

She sings out .. "Father, Remember! Come to us now at the Full Moon of Yule. Let the light of the Mother entice you, enthrall you, and bring you back to warm the earth and you're children. Renew the promise ..."

"Hoof and Horn, Hoof and Horn,
all who die will be reborn!
Corn and Grain, Corn and Grain,
all who die will come again!"
Father we invite you.
Father we entreat you.
Father we welcome you.
Be with us now ..... So Mote it Be!"

Owl watches as Reddeer "becomes". .... And waits...

...and Deer, already with so many songs in his head and heart, feels now one which calls also to his very being. Pulled from his spot - his place in the circle where all was certain, where what was expected was known, where the friends to either side of him were constant - he rounds the circle with his dear sister. Once again, warm hugs are exchanged and greetings passed. Once again, Deer tells himself that the certainty of this moment is what matters, and that what comes next - while indescribably glorious - will fade. However, no amount of self-reassurance can slow the racing of his heart as he watches Owl gracefully move about him. Tonight he is supposed to become a still point of an ever-moving cosmos. As always, the sheer joy of sharing being with higher powers is tempered by the anxiety regarding the many expectations which accompany that role.

As their dance continues, Deer becomes absorbed in the myriad points of light which - reflected from the mirrored shards in Owl's dress - spiral and dance about him. Even as his mind and heart steady, his body trembles. He feels her warm touch upon his breast and hears her words, "You are the altar," then loses the thread of her saying... but not of that which transpires. Deer suddenly reels - the change in perspective from five simple senses to seemingly endless points of vantage is always vertiginous. He seeks a single reference to ground within, and finds a view from a small hillock above a rice paddy in Malaysia - with the full moon rising and millions of lightening bugs pirouetting among the tall grasses. Stars wheel grandly above, lightening bugs reel gracefully about and all are reflected in the glass still waters of the rice field. In some tiny compartment of self, Deer whispers a silent "Thank you" to David Abrams for this anchor - then finds himself adrift among this sea of whirling lights.

With new eyes, not wholly his own, Deer looks back into the ritual room and sees his dear sister standing before him. He hears her call to "Come again..." and knows that momentarily she, too, shall "become" and that his feelings toward her shall be magnified a thousand-fold; not only as sister, but as lover, as mother and as immortal beloved. "Hoof and horn, hoof and horn," Deer hears and knows well that to all who desire to see - whether seeing shadow, or faint outline of magical light - that he wears both now.

As Deer drops to his left knee with both hands clasped upon his right, he reverently lowers his eyes to the floor and to his sister's feet. And, hearing her gentle permission among the many melodies already playing in his head, raises them... knees, womb, heart, breasts... knowing that his Goddess already resides within, as She does within all women, but must be called out for all the rest to see. Deer rises and places both hands squarely on Owl's shoulders, looking directly into her eyes, and notes that it is now she who trembles. While Deer can only imagine that the mixture of desire and apprehension which he felt are now hers, that self within otherness with which he now participates assures him that it is so.

And to Her Deer sings: "My Lady, I remember. I am remembered. Your light calls me from darkness. You touch brings me from cold. Join me, become enthralled among the world You have borne. Renew the promise..."

"Corn and Grain, Corn and Grain,
all who die shall come again!
Hoof and Horn, Hoof and Horn,
all who die shall be reborn!"
Mother we invite You.
Mother we entreat You.
Mother we welcome You.
Be here now!..."

Deer watches the change in Owl's demeanor - sees her shoulders straighten, sees her stand taller, sees her glow - and he knows that his Love walks among them... The shared history of aeons passes between them in a single glance. The recreation of an entire cosmos in a gentle hug. And passion beyond physical expression, but forerunner to all means of such, defines their relatedness to one another. After a seeming eternity, both turn to greet again the gathered celebrants...

...Once the energies running rampant about the ritual room begin to settle, Owl and Deer kiss and part - each returning to their respective places among this circle of friends. No amount of calm, however, can suppress the errant static discharges which seem to occur whenever one person touches another - and even more so when one releases the touch of another. From his place on the limn of their world, for such is this place which is none and all, this time which is timeless and eternal, Deer calls out:

"Our circle is raised and our wardens set. Our Lady and Lord have come among us. Let each who have praise, thanks or petition come forward to the altar which stands at the center of this world, and of being..."

Calm and serenity surround this circle…...
With love and respect Nym' steps forward. Removing a simple white candle from the pocket of her robe, she places it on the altar.

"Mother with your light I ignite this candle… a brighter year; a deeper peace is what I hope for my family and friends." Then placing two baby rattles next to the candle… "Anu if it be your will, please let the dreams of my daughters become reality."

Before returning to her place Nym' stops to hug Red Deer and Owl and then steps back to wait for…

...Deer, who approaches the altar grinning. "Tonight, I ask only that my dear friend have her best birthday yet of this turn upon the Wheel," he simply states. With a grand

genuflect, Deer moves towards Boudi and - still grinning mischievously - applies a mighty bear hug before presenting her with, circa 1950, a pair of black editor's garters and matching visor. "Wear these in good health, and for a modicum of fun. And keep up the grand work you and Imajicka undertook with The Wiccan Pagan Times, no matter in what venue it occurs. From my heart to yours, a thousand thank you's for three wonderful years of information."

Another hug, with a whispered one for Imajicka as well, and Deer returns to his place in the circle. He waits until...

Boudica laughs at Red Deer as she puts the garters in a pouch. She thinks to herself... "What an odd way to get your garter!"

She approaches the altar, and lays upon it an orange from her pouch. A bit of sunshine to balance the grey weather she's been wandering around in lately.

"Yea, another year older, and the Crones are gathering... where to go from here. So much to do. Maybe a few extra hours in a day? Changes coming all the time. Hang on for the ride..."

She whispers to the wind, and then turns around and looks to the Owl and the Deer. Glance over at Carri and Typo. Look around the room at all the other friends gathered. And a small grey owl drops from the shadows above and alights on her shoulder. She smiles, and returns to her place in the circle...

...pombagira takes a deep breath and steps up. she's never been in such a setting, and it's a little intimidating...

"goddess, i thank you for your kind attentions to my sister." she lays a small handmade book bound in purple silk on the altar. "you know what is contained within. i ask that you open my senses, my heart, my mind, and my soul to perceive what i need to know and do to make it manifest. thank you."

she pulls her hood over her head and steps back into the circle to wait for...

...suz steps forward and sets four acorns on the altar.

"mother and father, i ask for your guidance and blessings upon four friends who are clutching each other and staggering as they move along their paths. please smile on them."

she adds a web woven of blue and purple silk, with gold and silver ribbons.

"i ask for your help for me, as i begin the new journey of learning and discovery with my younger son. please help me to find the right way to re-kindle the flames of excitement and passion about learning in him, to keep my head and wits about me, and to have the patience and balance i will sorely need to have both boys at home. thank you."

smiling at her friends, suz steps back to await...

...Morgan, impressed beyond words (as always!) at the amount of time and thought that Red Deer has put into this month's working, steps forward from her place in the circle and lays a spray of some of her home-grown sage upon the altar. An herb of Jupiter, whose energies Morgan has been working with of late, it seems to be the perfect offering. She closes her eyes against the awe-inspiring tableau before her and stands, sensing the powerful magickal energies that have breathed strong life into this room. Finally she speaks softly:

"Mother, Father, now more than ever I need the strength You continue to give me. The coming year will be one of the most important of my life, and holds the greatest challenges I have yet had to face. Grant me the courage and personal fortitude to meet them and triumph against those who work against me. Grant recovery and health, too, to my little granddaughter. This I pray in Your names."

Morgan stands yet a moment more as her prayer wings its way to the Divine ones, then retreats to her place and watches...

...Jess lays a bloodstone with the other offerings.

"Lady and Lord, look in on my sister. It seems she and her platelets have had parting of ways again. I know she'll get through this. She'll be healthy again soon. But things were going so well for Jen. This just blew it all out of the water. So send her healing, send her energy, and send her high spirits."

Wiping her nose descreetly on her cuff, Jess sniffles back to her place...

...Owl has waited quietly for the petitioners to approach. As each has put forth their pleas, she can feel a tremor within her, and even as she looks at the familiar faces, she seems to be seeing them in a different light, thru another's eyes.

A chuckle wells up as Reddeer presents Boudica with her birthday gift... and she breathes a soft "Happy Birthday my sister... and welcome to Crone time!"

Pombigira also has a new glow about her. There are worries, but the Mother aspect is so strong in her. She will find strength to share and help her loved ones. It will be a troubling time for a while, but this year will bring a new awareness of her own power. As Owl watches Nym step back to her place in circle, their eyes meet and she nods to her sister. "Your prayers are heard", she whispers. Suz stands quietly, a slight frown of worry crosses her brow. Owl smiles reassuringly... "You can do this, my sister... don't let your own doubts weigh too heavily on your shoulders... you will know when the time is right to change your plans".

Morgan, there are changes coming. Don't bite off more than you can chew, but chew well those bits which are put on your plate. There is an issue which will effect your decisions, but you have yet to sort it out clearly in your mind. Give yourself time, and meditate on that which bothers you the most. Clarity will come. Your granddaughter is in good hands. Jess, sister, daughter ... work with your Runes. Knowledge is power... ask the questions, and then focus on that which must be fought. There is a battle to be won... and you can do this.

Once again, Owl wonders at these strong people who come to petition, not for themselves, but for others. And those who have petitioned quietly, without stating aloud their requests, Owl understands that they too are forming powerful thoughts of healing, and aiding those who are dear to them. There are those here with us who are taking the opportunity, not to petition, but to say "thanks" to the Goddess and the God for things which have happened in their lives, and they were very much aware that miracles were granted to them.

It has been nearly a decade since this site was found, and Rituals held, and the weaving began once again. As the threads were woven, new colors and textures have been added, and some threads were broken. Some could be repaired, and some had to be tied off. There are slubs, and holes, and wonderfully intricate pieces of our lives woven here. And with each weaving, the cloth becomes stronger and more beautiful. Subtle muted shades of thankfulness, bright glittering streaks of passion and joy, and dark, somber colors of grief and fear. Yet each time we come together, and set up our loom, the shared working of the patterns lightens our burdens. For here, we realize that in all the weaving, the hands of the Goddess and the God guide our hands, as we weave the patterns of our lives.

Owl takes a deep breath, and offers her own petition... "May all those gathered here find their prayers answered in the way which is most beneficial to all."

"So mote it be!"

...Lyn emerges from the shadows. She was going to just watch this month, feeling that

she had little to contribute. Now, she finds that her need to petition has become too great for her to hold in silence. Her purple over-dress rustles along the ground as she walks. Hoping that it's okay, she lights a candle with the flame from Red Deer's candle. She needs a bit of Light to carry with her.

All she has to offer up is a freshly re-potted "tree". She has no idea what it really is. It got left behind at an apartment she moved into. Despite being so spindly that it's previous caretaker had it tied to a couple of tall braces, it refused to die. At one point, it only had one yellowed leaf left. And yet, it survived. When Lyn had considered giving up on it, it showed new life in the form of a fresh shoot at the base. With hope; she cut of the 4 feet of spindly, withered trunk off and fertilized the heck out of it. The very top with it's few dried and yellowed leaves she put in a glass of fertilized water.

And despite all appearances, the top sprouted roots and the shoot has been growing vigorously. The top with it's new roots was potted today. This is all Lyn has to offer up.

"Lord and Lady, I can only hope to live up to the example this plant has shown. It was withered and to all appearances dead. And yet, it has survived and now is flourishing. Not only that, but I have two thriving plants from one. Right now, things are looking pretty bad. Almost like all is lost. I do not know what is going to happen in the next few months. It looks pretty bleak, given the news of the past few days. Both Bill and Greg have gotten bad news at work in the last 24 hours. Lord and Lady, all I can ask is that you help us to find the best course and help us see it through. Help me to follow the example of that plant and not give up. Help me to believe that we can make it through and that we will come back stronger than before."

She looks around in apology to be such a downer during such a profound and beautiful ritual. Then Lyn retreats back to the shadows as...

...so much has transpired this moon, and Deer is impressed that so many bring requests for aid to others. He caught Owl's eye as She responded to the petitions offered - both those silent and those spoken. Now, He moved back to the altar upon which so many offerings had been left. His left hand reaches out, briefly touching the space above each... and many new images form in His mind's eye.

First the baby rattles... the sound of sidewinders raising warning and the glitter of silver tokens for newborn children, the happiness of recreation. "All things in their time, my sister." Then the orange... tasting of sweetness with a bitter edge and holding condensed sunshine - long days ahead filled with beauty and grace. Glancing at Boudica, He adds a thought: "And no shortage of passion, dear sister." Next, the purple book... from which arises the Ace of Cups. "Uncover you face, beautiful mother. She had no more of a glow than do you, aeons ago when all was born. There are no promises in life except that we may live it." The acorns hold his awareness long... this path is private, yet He smiles openly at sus before moving to her newly woven web... from which hooves and antlers

flash. "You have asked closer commune with the Lord of the Hunt... thus are you given that opportunity. Remember that a good teacher finds learning in another's instruction." And the sage... aromatic, pungent, resilient - prospering in the garden of a strong woman. "Tend this well, dear Morgan. As your sage expands its reach, so may you." Over the bloodstone... blue, moons and medicine; healing. "Jess, Our energy she has, and you may be the envoy of her spirits." Finally, to the newly sprouted one... green and growth, durability and reliance - and the potted one seems to glow. "Dearest Lyn - never apologize for offering what is in your heart or for asking to have your needs met. And yes, even from the brink a better life may be brought forth. Take Our flame to your heart and expect that better times shall come."

As the perspectives shift and shimmer, Deer *sees* the weave which emanates from their rite, even as he *feels* his own return to usual consciousness... a shudder, a sudden departure of one warmth only to be replaced by another, and a grounding. Glancing again at Owl, he sees a familiar face. No longer She with whom He has danced countless rounds on the Great Wheel, at least upon her surface. And Deer *knows* that the dance within a Dance, the web in the midst of all weaving, continues. From across the years, a song of the Aztec nation comes to him:

We only come to sleep
We only come to dream
It is not true no, it is not true
That we came to live on the earth.
We are changed into the grass of springtime
Our hearts will grow green again
And they will open their petals
But our body is like a rose tree:
It puts forth flowers and then withers.

Looking up, Deer spies above the wide open skylight a ring about the full moon at her zenith... and a myriad of six-pointed stars wheeling gently within night's embrace. He returns to Owl's side, and arm in arm they perambulate the circle together. West, South, East, North... they thank and release from service the spirits which have dutifully warded the circle this moon - at the same time recognizing their debt to each. "Our circle is open but unbroken," Deer states as he moves toward the eastern wall. "Before we adjourn to the great hall to feast and frolic, I'd like to share with you one more surprise of this place." And opening the panel first discovered by his dear sister Cloud, Deer gently pulls down a second, smaller lever. All are caught by the purr of a second set of blades, a much smaller iris of leaded glass at the skylight's pinnacle. As the dome itself slowly opens, thousands of frozen stars descend from the heavens... some falling directly onto the celebrants gathered below, some dancing gracefully in breezes generated by the meeting of the frigid air above and the magically warm air within. And some, as though with a mind of their own, dancing in patterns which no science will ever explain...

Deer throws back his head - mouth open - and waits for the first to land upon his tongue, before closing the dome and the skylight and leading the group of merry friends towards

the welcoming feast in the adjacent hall. As all move toward the table, Deer pauses to close the heavy doors which separate the hall and the ritual room. As he pulls them to on ancient hinges, Deer whispers - to the presence which occupies that space within - "A thousand thank you's for the Dance..."